

MISSILE MAY LAUNCH DESERT BOOM TOWNS

Thousands of Workers Would Go
to Utah and Nevada to Build
Mobile Weapons System

CARSON CITY, Nev., Oct. 13 (AP) — Chaotic, boomtown growth looms on the desert horizon in Utah and Nevada as a result of plans for "man's largest project," the controversial MX missile system.

The boom resulting from the \$30 billion to \$60 billion project could mean as many as 125,000 to 150,000 new residents within a few years in an area that now has fewer than 60,000 citizens.

Ely, with 5,600 residents, is the biggest Nevada town in the area, and the largest Utah town is Cedar City, with about 15,000.

"Boom-and-bust" towns are nothing new to the arid region. Nevada mining camps literally sprouted overnight, turned into towns and then disappeared as gold and silver veins pinched out. But more than half a century has passed since the last "boomer."

With the MX, Nevada would get about two-thirds of the project's 4,600 missile silos. The one-third remaining would be situated in Utah. And 200 missiles would be kept somewhere within that silo network — a vast, underground system stretching west from south of Salt Lake City to near the Nevada-California border.

'Larger Than the Pyramids'

The magnitude of the project is described by a key Air Force supporter, Brig. Gen. Guy Hecker Jr., as "man's largest project, larger than the Great Wall, larger than the Pyramids, larger than the Alaska pipeline or the Panama Canal."

This would all be built in a 10,000-square-mile Great Basin region of hard, dry lake beds separated by craggy peaks or low, brown, tree-scarce mountain ranges.

From an airplane, one sees mile after mile of sand and rock, sagebrush, a sprinkling of aspen groves in mountains, and a rare spot of green where a farmer has found enough irrigation water. One can go for miles and miles and see only range, cattle or wild horses.

The area seems so desolate that people, typically newcomers, make jokes about the "lunar" landscape. And many who love the seeming emptiness call themselves "desert rats."

State Senator Rick Blakemore, a Democrat in whose sprawling district nearly all of the Nevada MX installations would be situated, is worried about "what the human impact of the MX will be."

A Threat to Privacy

The Senator added: "Some people in my district tell me they moved here because they didn't want to be surrounded by a lot of other people. And they don't want the MX for that reason."

Mike Bourn, executive director of the White Pine County, Nev., Development Corporation, which has been trying to encourage development in the Ely area, thinks the explosive growth can be handled only with extensive Federal, state and local planning.

Money for schools and other services is a major concern, he says. He cites particular worry about police protection in Nevada, which is known for its glittering casinos and tolerates bordellos in some areas.

When citizens mention their fears, they talk of drastically increased crime, more pollution, water problems, cost-of-living increases and changes in the pace of life.

The water needs of the huge MX system would be so tremendous — an estimated 17,000 acre-feet yearly over a seven-year construction period — that United States Representative Jim Santini, Democrat of Nevada, has suggested new talks on tapping the big Columbia River system flowing through Idaho and Washington to the north.

Water From Under Dry Land

Mr. Santini said that more than 100 billion gallons would otherwise have to be pulled from beneath the nation's driest lands so that two million tons of cement could be mixed and for other water needs.

A University of Nevada professor, James Walker, who took part in a study of the impact of a proposed power plant that could be built at the same time as the MX systems, foresees "drastic" change.

"It's going to create a boomtown atmosphere," he said, and pointed to another source of worry for some. "They think they'll become the bull's-eye of the world."

Gov. Bob List of Nevada said that the big question about the project was "precisely what it would look like on the map."

The area closed off for the MX silos would total just 25 square miles. But security areas would involve several thousand square miles in Nevada alone, according to Congressional studies.